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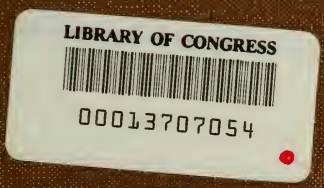

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64TH CONGRESS
2d Session

SENATE

DOCUMENT
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WOMAN SUFFRAGE

ARTICLE

ON THE

BIOLOGICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE WOMAN QUESTION

BY

MRS. ANNIE RILEY HALE

17-2625

PRESENTED BY MR. McCUMBER

JANUARY 19, 1917.—Referred to the Committee on Printing

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SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 337.

Reported by Mr. CHILTON.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,
January 31, 1917.

Resolved, That the manuscript submitted by the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. McCumber), on January 19, 1917, entitled "Biological and Sociological Aspects of the Woman Question," by Mrs. Annie Riley Hale, be printed as a Senate document.

Attest:

JAMES M. BAKER,
Secretary.

D. of D.
FEB 14 1917

BIOLOGICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE WOMAN QUESTION.

By Mrs. Annie Riley Hale.

Men accustomed to viewing only the political aspects of double suffrage are prone to overlook a deeper significance hidden in certain underlying principles of biology and sociology.

Not as politicians, but as the sons, brothers, husbands, and fathers of women, I ask your consideration of the following fundamental facts inseparably bound up with the welfare of the race:

Man and woman, differently constituted in every fiber of their being, have a different contribution to make to the world, a different part to play both in government and in industry; and for their separate rôles they manifestly require a separate training. The feminist contention, that women require masculine activities for their development, is as scientifically unsound as it is socially pernicious. All the laws of growth are against it, for everything grows to greatest perfection which grows naturally and easily—along the lines of its own being. "The best of the higher evolution of mind will never be safely reached," said Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, "until the woman accepts the irrevocable decree which made her woman and not man. Something in between she can not be." "Doing a man's work in a man's way," says Ida Tarbell (who has, incidentally, been doing a man's work for some years), "almost invariably means for a woman self-consciousness, friction, self-suppression. It is costly to society and to the individual, for it means at least the partial atrophy of powers and qualities peculiar to woman, and essential to the harmony, the charm, and the vigor of society. Her differences are her strength; their full growth completes the human cycle; to suppress these differences is to rob not merely her individual life, but the life of the world, of its full ripeness."

And there is a yet darker side to the feminist project of converting the world into "an epicene institution"—to quote Sir Almroth Wright—wherein men and women shall labor, fight, and love on the same moral and physical plane. In preparation for writing "The Eden Sphinx," I had occasion to examine many works on biology and sex psychology, and with but one exception—Weininger, a German authority, whom the others pronounced a lunatic and his work clearly pathological—I found the interpreters of the life force and the laws governing its operation a unit in affirming fundamental sex differences—structural, physiological, and psychical—between man and woman; and that these differences increase as we ascend the evolutionary scale; that the difference is more marked between a highly developed man and a highly developed woman than between primitive man and woman.

In a word, the scientists say that "civilization rises and falls with sex differences," and that all attempts to erase these are in conflict with the law of development and pointing backward instead of forward. Because of the psychological law governing occupations, because the character of one's work invariably gets into the nature and character of the worker, it is patent that the feminist ambition

to duplicate all men's activities—and in some cases their prerogatives—in the lives of women, if pursued to its ultimate conclusion will make of us in due season a race of mannish women and womanish men, and this—in the judgment of all medical authorities, past and present—spells racial degeneracy. Ask your physician what transvestism means—or look it up in a medical dictionary—if you would properly interpret the woman who is proposing to measure arms with man in every field of endeavor. You will see that, so far from being the vanguard of freedom and progress she so proudly proclaims herself, she is in reality the apostle of decadence, and the herald of moral and social chaos. Already there is grave cause for apprehension in the ever-increasing number of women who wish to usurp men's functions, and the increasing number of men who are willing to have them do so. These are the warning indices of the peril that confronts us. The creed of feminism—of which suffragism is an integral part—is very definitely and succinctly set forth by one of their number, Olive Schreiner (author of "Woman and Labor"), in the words: "For the present we take all labor for our province. From the judge's seat to the legislator's chair; from the stateman's closet to the merchant's desk; from the chemist's laboratory to the astronomer's tower, there is no post or form of toil for which it is not our intention to fit ourselves. There is no closed door we do not intend to force open, no fruit in the garden of knowledge it is not our determination to eat."

But what says science to this bold program? Herbert Spencer—the man who first popularized the scientific theory of evolution—explained the physical handicap sex imposes upon woman on the theory that "there is a positive antagonism between the higher evolutionary tendency and reproduction;" and that "the more extensive organic expenditure demanded of the female by the reproductive functions, limits the feminine development to a notably greater extent than the masculine." This "Spencer's Biological Law," as it was called, had the indorsement of such authorities as Darwin, Huxley, Lombroso, Milne Edwards, Iwan Bloch, Havelock Ellis, Oskar Schultze, and a score of others who might be named. They all concur in the idea that the unquestionably existing physical differences between the sexes correspond equally without question to existing psychical differences, using the word "psychical" in its relation to the whole spiritual being—mind, will, and feeling. "To suppose," says Herbert Spencer, "that along with the unlikenesses between their parental activities, there do not go unlikenesses of mental faculties, is to suppose that here alone in all nature there is no adjustment of special powers to special functions."

The history of human society from its beginning abundantly confirms the scientific theory on this head. Everywhere in the domain of creative thought—in science, art, literature, invention, and religion even—it is man who has led, and woman, where she has entered these fields at all, has been for the most part a feeble imitator. There are no female counterparts for such names as Bach, Handel, Chopin, Verdi; Phidias, Da Vinci, Rubens, Turner, Millet; Homer, Shakespeare, Dante, Goethe, Milton, Burns; Aristotle, Roger Bacon, Newton, Darwin, Spencer; Socrates, Plato, Francis Bacon, Locke, Berkeley, Kant, Edison; Confucius, Buddha, Mahomet, Swedenborg; and it is idle to contend that this is due to accident or custom. The explanation lies in the bedrock of sex differentiation.

But why should any one argue from this that woman is in anywise inferior to man, or that her work in the world is of less import? Sex equality does not mean identity of function, as the feminists and suffragists seem to think, neither does cooperation imply duplication of effort; but just the contrary. Who is sponsor for the idea that man's work, any of it or all of it, is more important than the man himself? Is the building of railroads and telegraphs more valuable to the nation than the physical and moral improvement of the race?

Yet this is woman's special mission, because to her is intrusted the life force in a peculiar manner; into her hands is given the guardianship and training of the race in its early, plastic stage. Not only as the mother, but as the teacher, at the time when teaching counts for most, she is given supreme control of the two greatest forces in life—nature and nurture.

Her larger share in the work of carrying forward the stream of life gives her a stronger pull with the child than the father, even before its birth; while the obligation the state lays on him of earning the family's support takes him out of the home and leaves the mother practically a free hand in creating the "early social environment," which all sociological authorities agree absolutely controls the future of the nation. In short, the mother furnishes, or at least has the opportunity of furnishing, the bulk of hereditary tendencies; and the mother, assisted by the grandmother, maiden aunt, or older sister, if there be such in the home, and by the woman teacher, in the day school, in the Sunday school, furnishes practically all of the environment in which the young human plant buds and flowers; and heredity plus environment pretty nearly sets the boundaries of human destiny. There is not a dissenting note from this among all the sociologists, educators, and publicists of the world from the most ancient to the most recent. "The mind of the growing generation controls the future conduct of the nation," says Boris Sidis, the famous Russian educator and child psychologist of New York City, who in this merely echoes the teaching of Solomon, Socrates, and Plato; while Ellen Key, in her excellent works on child culture, upholds the maxim of the Jesuits as to the crucial importance of "the first eight years."

And the point requiring special emphasis—because feminists and suffragists are doing their utmost to obscure it—is that this crucial period of individual development having been left for centuries in woman's hands lays upon our sex the greater fundamental responsibility for abuses; and that man's failure in the state or in society is only the logical fruit of woman's failure in the home. It is a curious twist of logical sequence in suffrage propaganda that they appear to think whenever they can score against men, they are scoring for women. In truth, their man-indicting formulas only saw off the limb they are sitting on, and put them in the position of Aesop's wolf who charged the lamb downstream with muddying the water.

The measure of woman's responsibility for abuses, social and governmental, is the measure of her opportunity for preventing them. Much good remedial legislation passed by male electors and legislators fails of enforcement because women have neglected their foundational task of training an enlightened, responsible public sentiment, which is essential to the enforcement of any statutory law. Food experts are everywhere proclaiming that a scientific knowledge of cooking and proper regulation of children's habits in eating and drinking would do more to abolish the demon rum than all the

prohibition laws from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Miss Lathrop, of the Federal Child Welfare Bureau, said in a recently published statement that 300,000 babies die annually in the United States through their mothers' ignorance of the simplest principles of infant hygiene.

The disingenuous suffrage claim that "mothers need the ballot with which to protect the home," can be met with the incontrovertible fact that what the home needs protection from chiefly is from the ignorance and incompetence of the so-called "home makers." Their other flippant pronouncement that "it wouldn't take a woman more than 10 minutes to vote" may be very justly rebuked with the remark that the important thing about woman and the home is not how much time she spends in it or away from it, but knowing her business when she is there.

It is not home as a place, but home as an ideal, an institution, which is important; and this is, or should be, woman's supreme concern, no matter where she is, because it is her supreme reward, for it is here she must find her happiness, if at all.

In these howling feminist days of scornful denunciation of everything distinctly feminine—of stigmatizing the home as "a prison," and the home duties as "household drudgery"—it is necessary to remind the normal woman that even if it be a cage, it is the cage that holds the Bluebird for her. In no other place can she find it.

A psychologic truth missed by the feminists and suffragists—for they are as bad psychologists as logicians—is that it is not what one gets out of a task but what one puts into it that makes it interesting.

The home worker who finds her work dull, colorless, and irksome is she who has never put any intelligent thought into it, who is performing it probably on the lowest possible level; and the truth she needs to grasp is that nothing is fine, neither love nor work, until we put thought into it. The occupation of home making is useful, necessary work not excelled, if equaled, in importance by any other work in the world. It can be made as much of a "fine art" as the cultural development of the home maker will allow. The woman who is making a success of it, whether by doing the work herself or by supervising the work of others, to achieve the net result of a well-ordered, peaceful abode, is as honorably employed as any Government official or professional man; and she is as economically independent as if she were working for a factory boss or the head of a business firm. The feminist charge that all wives who accept a support from their husbands are "living by their sex" is not only a gross distortion of the marital relation, but in the case of the honest home worker it is an economic lie. Material home comfort is a marketable commodity which when furnished in hotels, clubs, and boarding houses, is rated rather high; the fact that a woman is providing it for her own husband and children instead of the public does not in the least alter this economic side of it, and her sex relation has nothing to do with it. That is high or low in character according to the character of the individual parties to it. Parasitic women there are of course, have always been, in every class of life; the idle, sensuous, mollusk type, who merely lives to bedeck her person and gratify sensual desires. But unless we can arouse and shame her into penitential effort to render some honest equivalent for her maintenance we'd much better leave her to afflict the individual man who was unlucky enough to get her than to make her the excuse for driving all women out of the home to become the

industrial oppressors of all men; and this is what "economic independence" of the feminist brand means in the last analysis.

In view of the fact that the woman in public industry is more often cited as a "reason" for double suffrage than almost any other, it might be well for the men who favor it on this ground to investigate the deleterious effects of her participation in outward strife in so far as it has been tried.

Whole libraries of evidence have been given by doctors, factory inspectors, investigators, and officials of every grade as to the harmfulness to health and morals of dragging and driving women through the marts of public industry. Even the noted feminist teacher, Ellen Key, who once advocated all the new doctrines, in her latest work, "The Renaissance of Motherhood," completely reverses her former position in saying: "The racially wasteful, socially pernicious, and soul-withering consequences of the employment of wives and mothers outside the home must cease."

So the advocates of double suffrage who rest their case on woman's invasion of public industry are saying in effect, "Seeing we have one foot in the mire, let's put the other in."

It is unhappily true that some women have been forced by the exigencies of circumstance into the outer struggle and have acquitted themselves well and creditably. But accepting a thing as a misfortune and trying to make the best of it is a very different proposition from a deliberate, systematized plan to reorganize society on that basis in the name of economic independence and personal freedom for women. The wholesale employment of European women in men's callings as a result of the war, while too early yet to mark its baneful effects upon the women, is already bearing disastrous fruit in the greatly increased death rate of children. This has become so alarming in London that the authorities have taken steps to mitigate its worst features.

Yet everywhere in feminist circles the shouldering of men's burdens by European women is acclaimed as a triumph of feminist philosophy, as marking the "liberation" of women. They proudly cite this as proof of her complete "equality" with man, not understanding that it is a cruel wastage of the forces of womanhood, and curiously blind to what it reveals of their real attitude toward man. The insane craving to imitate all his performances betrays a slavish admiration of the male creature that but ill accords with their sometime rancorous indictment of his selfishness and tyranny. It also betrays a contempt for woman and woman's work that is well-nigh pathological in its distorted sense of social values. Whatever else may be said for it, the holders of this view can not be properly called "emancipated." Whether they realize it or not, it reveals them dragging a sexual chain or bound fast in Promethean bondage to the masculine rock. The only "free woman" is the one who knows she has a womanly individuality to be developed in all womanly ways; and the only reason women are ever weak and ineffective is because they have not been thus developed, have not discovered the cultural possibilities of their woman job.

Woman suffrage per se is negligible. Merely voting, divorced from office seeking and office holding, or otherwise actively participating in practical politics, is not worth all the fuss that is being made over it either by its advocates or opponents. It is significant, not because of the thing itself, but because of the animating motive

that is back of the demand; because of what is lurking under it, and skulking behind it. That which lurks beneath it, constituting the only logical basis for it, is sex distrust and sex hostility; and while these unhappily exist in some instances, we should not encourage them as permanent social ideals by adapting government to them.

Even as an instrument of sex war, the woman ballot is futile and superfluous. The argument that she could wrest from man any extra concessions through an instrument which it is optional with him to grant or withhold carries an inherent contradiction that throws the whole case for woman suffrage into the realm of logical absurdity. For surely if the majority of men are willing to give her the ballot, they are just as willing to give her anything she could obtain by the ballot; and if the majority of men are not willing to grant it, she will never get it. So that the ballot chasers are thrown upon the horns of a senseless dilemma. At its best, double suffrage is a wasteful duplication of a governmental function—by no means the most important—already being performed by men; and at its worst it is the outpost of feminism, which is skulking behind it, and which by its proposal to substitute the competitive or duplicative, for the complementary, sex relation, is striking at the family unity whose cementing bond is the sex interdependence and mutual helpfulness of its parental heads. Such interdependence arises from an equitable distribution of duties and responsibilities, assigning home government to woman and state control to man, in accordance with their natural sex differences, and also makes for efficiency in each sphere. If modern industry has taught us anything it is that the keynote to efficiency is division of labor, specialization, and concentration in one's chosen vocation. Home government is essentially personal; State government is essentially impersonal; only greater confusion, inefficiency, and waste could result from sex competition or duplication of effort in these two distinct but closely allied spheres.

Since the home government antedates the state in every case, and exactly determines the character of it, woman's share in the nation's life is much more important than man's; and no set of women who ignore this truth, who are so superficial and dishonest in their thinking as to evade woman's fundamental responsibility and charge up her failures and misfortunes to "man-made laws" and man-imposed conventions, are worthy leaders of any really constructive and progressive "woman movement." To argue, as suffragists do, that the woman ballot will behave differently from woman herself, or that she can retrieve at the polls her failures in the home, is to reveal a quality of unreasoning smugness which of itself is sufficient condemnation of their propaganda.

When women shall learn their own business, so that the majority of the male voters issuing from their home rule shall be sufficiently trained in standards of honor and public duty to learn what they are voting about, and vote their convictions without fear or favor, it will be time enough then to discuss the advisability of adding women to the electorate. But as this will require several generations, and the state is standing all it can bear at women's hands in these unfit, irresponsible, "woman-made" men she is contributing to its service, there is absolutely no occasion for this generation either to settle or even consider the question of woman suffrage.

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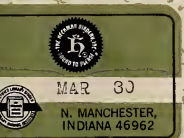
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